

Daily Breeze  
L.A. COUNTY  
WED 5-6-15

# Funds eyed for sex traffic task force

**\$1.5M federal grant  
sought to target  
organized operations**

**By Sarah Favot**

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The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously supported an application from the Sheriff's Department for a \$1.5 million federal grant to create a Los Angeles County Human Trafficking Task Force.

Sheriff Jim McDonnell said the task force would target those who run an organized operation that exploits women as well as those who pay for sex. The task force would also provide services for the young women who are victimized by the sex trade industry. Part of the grant would be used to create a public service campaign to combat messages in the music industry celebrating a pimp lifestyle.

"We're in the position here in Los Angeles County where we can be a national leader in combatting sex trafficking," McDon-

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nell said.

The federal grant from the Department of Justice would extend over three years and the county would be required to match 25 percent of the funding, which could be awarded in October.

"The most basest criminal activities that are taking place jeopardize our young people's future, their lives and their security," Supervisor Michael Antonovich said.

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl said she hoped the task force would be made up of representatives from different backgrounds with different cultural sensitivities and language skills.

The grant requires that the county work with a non-government agency with the ability to provide services for the women rescued from the sex trade industry and the county has already selected the Los Angeles-based Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking.

McDonnell said some of the victims are as young as 12.

"These are local kids, they're often kids from foster homes, who have been in the care of courts and the system and who have been abused from a

very early age," the sheriff said. A series of reports in the Daily News, a sister paper of the Daily Breeze, last year highlighted the plight of women caught in the sex trafficking industry and how some communities and agencies were working to help them.

Sheriff's Department Capt. Merrill Ladenheim said a group has already been working in Long Beach, Compton and Century City for the past three years to rescue sex trafficking victims and arrest pimps and johns. The proposed task force would expand that initiative.

He said about 25 young women have been rescued and given housing, medical and mental health services. The Sheriff's Department has arrested about 41 pimps and 140 johns in different sting operations in the last three years, Ladenheim said.

"We believe the numbers are much greater than that," said Ladenheim. "It scares us that we're not impacting this as deeply as we think the problem exists."

He believes the number of arrests will double once the task force is formed.

"These guys are so manipulative," Ladenheim said. "They're masters of having these girls be codependent. It's a terrible thing. It's brainwashing in the most grotesque way."

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ANALYSIS

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## Probation officers arrested

Five county employees have been accused of stealing thousands of dollars in unearned benefits and of lying on doctors' workers' comp forms

By Sarah Favot

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In the past year, five Los Angeles County deputy probation officers were accused of stealing thousands of dollars in unearned sick time and disability and arrested for allegedly lying on doctor's notes and workers' compensation benefit claims, an

analysis of Probation Department records and court documents show.

Three of the arrests have been made since January. In August one former employee pleaded guilty to insurance fraud charges and was ordered to return \$31,000 of the benefits she earned through forged workers' compensation claims that alleged she injured herself

while restraining a juvenile — on a day she wasn't at work, court records show.

The employees worked as deputy probation officers at juvenile lockups, which were under years of federal monitoring until earlier this spring. The Department of Justice mandated several reforms to prevent mistreatment of minors and employee misconduct. The Probation Department

achieved compliance with the federal requirements about a month ago.

In 2012, the department began to crack down on employee misconduct after about one employee a week was arrested for charges from driving under the influence to attempted murder.

Raymond Milton, 42, was arrested in January on two counts of insurance fraud. Prosecutors said he allegedly altered notes from a dentist's office twice in early 2013 that allowed him to take time off and collect \$2,400

in sick pay. He pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Kimberly Evans, 46, was arrested in March after investigators discovered she allegedly altered medical paperwork and earned \$1,700 in sick time. She posted \$30,000 bond and pleaded not guilty to three felony counts of insurance fraud, grand theft of personal property and presentation of a fraudulent claim and a misdemeanor count of alteration of a medical record.

In April, Cynthia Hernandez

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# Probation

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turned herself in after investigators learned she altered medical documentation and claims totalling \$2,800 in sick time on her time card. She pleaded not guilty to three counts of felony insurance fraud.

Jennifer Kaufman, senior director of the Probation Department's Professional Standards Bureau, said alleged workers' compensation fraud cases are difficult to prove because if someone reports seeing an employee who is on disability playing basketball, for example, many times doctors will say they've instructed the employee to begin some physical activity to build muscle strength.

However, the bureau's four-investigator Special Projects Team began looking at cases in which an employee had been denied vacation time but then received a doctor's note that allowed the employee to take sick time off during the denied vacation period.

"Employees would submit a doctor's note that looked suspicious," she

said. Prosecutor Jennifer Snyder, who oversees the District Attorney's Office Healthcare Insurance Fraud Division, which prosecutes these cases, said of the 87 felony cases her office filed last year, 17 of the cases involved public employees. Two years ago when she came to the office none of the cases filed involved public employees, she said.

Both Snyder and Kaufman said sworn probation officers and other law enforcement employees should be held accountable.

"It shows a lack of integrity if you're lying about something," Kaufman said. "We're supervising probationers where you have to live a higher standard."

Kaufman said the employees are placed on unpaid administrative leave while they face the charges.

Snyder said she will file a case no matter how much money was taken.

"There's no way you can say to someone, you can lie about something as long as it costs less than x," she said. "We look at the criminal act itself — lying."

Last year, a Probation

Department and state Department of Insurance investigation led to the conviction of Robyn Palmer, 30, for two counts of insurance fraud after it was discovered Palmer was not at work the day an injury occurred for which she filed a workers' compensation claim. She pleaded guilty in August and received five years of probation and was ordered to pay \$31,122 in restitution to Allstate Insurance for the false claim.

Another case is pending against Cynthia Wesley, of Claremont, who was arrested in September on two felony counts of insurance fraud. She pleaded not guilty to the charges. The state Department of Insurance alleges she illegally collected \$1,000 in workers' compensation claims.

"The community, the residents of Los Angeles County are entitled to know that workers' compensation benefits are being paid to those who are injured and those who are truly entitled," Snyder said.

INVESTIGATION

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## State Controller to probe City of Industry

By Sarah Favot

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A spokesman for State Controller Betty Yee said Tuesday officials will probe of the City of Industry's \$326 million financial arrangement with its former mayor and companies associated with him and his family members.

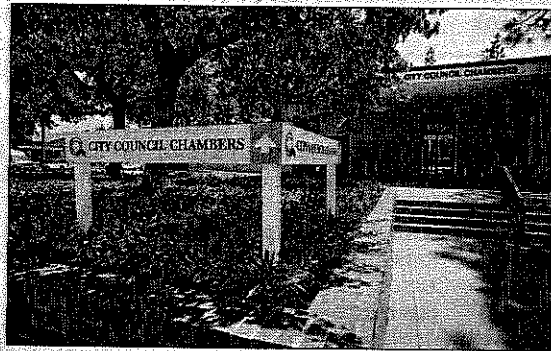
Yee's office began the probe last week after this news organization exclusively obtained a KPMG audit that questioned payments to former Mayor David Perez and his associates.

"We are reviewing their financial transaction reports because of the recent news coverage," spokesman John Hill said.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously asked the state controller and the district attorney to investigate contracts with Perez-controlled companies in the City of Industry and surrounding cities and unincorporated areas.

Supervisors Michael D. Antonovich and Hilda Solis introduced the motion last week, but amended it to include Yee's office.

"Given the magnitude of the audit findings on the city of Industry, Supervisor Hilda Solis and I are re-



questing a grand jury investigation into possible fraud, corruption and illegal activity as well as a thorough review of the city's administrative and internal accounting controls by the state controller," Antonovich said in an emailed statement.

"I support a full criminal investigation into possible fraud, corruption and waste of public funds in the City of Industry, and I have called on the State Controller to conduct its own review in order to have a complete and independent accounting of the facts," Solis said in an emailed statement.

A spokeswoman from the District Attorney's Office said Friday prosecutors began investigating the case.

An audit of Industry's finances showed the city paid more than

\$326 million over 20 years to companies owned by Perez and his family.

The supervisors' motion was solely focused on Perez's contracts in the City of Industry, however several residents from Pomona addressed the board Tuesday with concerns about the Perez family's construction of a waste transfer station in their city.

Residents were concerned about the health impacts of the transfer station in a residential area with schools.

"They're just buying out businesses in our city and trying to pretend that they care," said Ingrid Gutierrez. "As I'm sure you've heard in the recent newspaper articles they have a complete disregard for the environment."

Properties owned by the City of Industry are part of this news organization's investigation along with former mayor David Perez's companies.  
LEO JARZOMB  
STAFF  
PHOTOGRAPHER

LOMITA

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## Supes OK settlement in death of 2-year-old

By City News Service

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved a \$450,000 payment to settle a lawsuit brought by the father of a 2-year-old Lomita boy who was beaten to death by a parolee living with the toddler, his mother and her two daughters.

Daniel Vega, the mother's live-in boyfriend, was sentenced to 56 years to life behind bars for killing Gabriel Dominguez while the tot's mother was out running errands in 2011.

Vega was 25 years old at the time of his arrest and was wanted for a parole violation. He had been convicted of making criminal threats.

The lawsuit filed on behalf of Gabriel's father, Robert Dominguez, accused the Department of Children and Family Services of breach of duty. The suit

alleged that a social worker "lied and fabricated evidence," saying that he saw the toddler roughly two weeks before his death and that "Gabriel had no marks or bruises."

A medical examiner testified at Vega's trial that the boy had more than 100 bruises and severe internal injuries caused by blows to his body. Some of those injuries were older, according to the medical examiner.

Marisa Mendoza and Vega had dated in high school and reconnected after her son was born. Vega, who took over caring for the toddler, complained that the mother "babied" him, according to witnesses who testified at trial. She discovered bruises on the toddler at least twice in the two months before he died, which Vega attributed to falls in the shower and bathtub.



FANCHON BLAKE, 1921-2015

# Her lawsuit broke LAPD glass

BY DAVID COLKER

In 1971, after nearly two decades with the Los Angeles Police Department, Fanchon Blake openly objected to policies that prevented her and other women from rising above the rank of sergeant.

Then-Chief Ed Davis belittled her stance at a meeting of female officers, making it clear he felt real police work should be done by men. One drawback to women on the force, he said, was that they have "monthlies."

Blake didn't respond, but was furious. "You don't know it, Chief," she later wrote in her unpublished autobiography, "But war has just been declared between us."

She won the war.

Blake, 93, whose class-action lawsuit targeting the LAPD resulted in one of the most sweeping changes in the department's history, died Tuesday at a group home in Bend, Ore.

She had had a series of falls and was in declining health, said her niece, Shelly Maurice-Maier.

When the Blake Consent Decree that resulted from her lawsuit went into effect in 1981, there were about 175 women on the force. By 2010, when she was honored at a Police Academy function, there were nearly 2,000, and many of the officers held high ranks, including an assistant chief.

That progress, however, was not quite good enough for Blake. "I wanted to be chief of police," she declared. The crowd cheered.

LAPD Chief Charlie Beck acknowledged that female officers still faced prejudice. "Women not only do at least as well as men in this job," he said at the event, "they do it with an extra burden."

The chief's attitude was in sharp contrast to when Blake filed her lawsuit in 1973 through the non-profit Center for Law in the Public Interest in Los Angeles.

"We were thrilled to have had this person come to us to work on this case," said Eleanor Shellard, who at the time was a paralegal with the group. But they warned her that there could be consequences at work.



JAMES CACCAVO Los Angeles Times

## 'THEY WEREN'T GOING TO PROMOTE US'

Fanchon Blake "was ostracized, given a receptionist's job," after she sued the LAPD over its policies toward female officers. But her eventual victory brought big changes to the department.

Blake knew that, and didn't care.

"We slowly, through the years, figured out they weren't going to promote us," she said in a 2011 videotaped interview. "They insulted me one too many times, and that's when I decided, 'Hey, this isn't worth it.'"

"They fire me, they fire me. So what?"

Blake wasn't fired, but the backlash came quickly. On the day her lawsuit hit the news, she found

that her desk in the investigations unit had been cleaned out and she'd been moved to the reception area.

"I was ostracized, given a receptionist's job, basically," she said in a 1990 Times interview.

Male officers wouldn't speak to her and one day when she got sick at work, no one would drive her to see a doctor. It turned out she had had a mild stroke.

Less than a year after filing the suit, Blake quit the force and took

private security jobs.

The case continued slowly through the courts. In 1977, a federal judge in Los Angeles handed down a decision that favored the LAPD. But two years later the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that ruling.

When the state Supreme Court let the appeals court decision stand, Blake was victorious.

Consent decrees were forged to allow not only more women but also more racial minorities to join

*2 in  
story*

# ceiling

the LAPD, and obstacles to promotion, including height requirements, were modified. No less an observer than bestselling author James Wambaugh, who had been on the force, said it changed the culture of the LAPD.

"Blake did a great service when she sued the city," Wambaugh said in a 1991 Times interview. "I think female cops can go a long way toward helping to mitigate the super-aggressive, paramilitary macho myth of the gung-ho cop and introducing the sobering element of maturity in police work."

She was born Fanchon Gesford on May 15, 1921, in Huntsville, Utah. Her family moved a few years later to the remote White Oak Lodge area in the Tehachapi Mountains in California where they homesteaded. "I spent three of the happiest years of my life there," she told the Associated Press in 2009. Her beloved dog was her main companion and she was educated in a one-room schoolhouse.

She served in the Army from 1942 to 1948, reaching the rank of major, and then joined the LAPD. She was re-inducted into the Army in 1951 to help with an internal drug investigation in Japan. She returned to the LAPD in 1953.

Her first two marriages ended in divorce; her third was to Shannon Blake, who died in Manhattan Beach in 1981. During the time her suit was making its way through the courts, Fanchon Blake moved to the Pacific Northwest and began a relationship with a woman that continued for about 15 years before they broke up.

Her legacy lives on at the LAPD Police Academy, where the women's training facility is co-dedicated to her.

But one of the most moving acknowledgments of her accomplishments happened at the 2010 event when then-Assistant Chief Sandy Jo MacArthur approached Blake. MacArthur took the stars denoting her rank from her uniform and pinned them on Blake's jacket.

Blake, a cop so tough she took on an entire police department, wept.

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work in the field of sales and also enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves. He entered the business products

colleagues in both professional and volunteer endeavors. Most important he was a wonderful husband, father,

Canada, and Europe. He is survived by his daughter Peggy Daugherty

to Pamela Power. You were loved and will never be forgotten.